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MUST THE WAR GO ON?

AN INQUIRY

WHETHER THE UNION CAN BE RESTORED BY ANY OTHER MEANS THAN WAR, AND WHETHER PEACE UPON ANY OTHER BASIS WOULD BE SAFE OR DURABLE.

BY HENRY FLANDERS.

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"We ought with reverence to approach that tremendous divinity that loves courage, but commands counsel. War never leaves, where it found a nation. It is never to be entered into without mature deliberation; not a deliberation lengthened out into a perplexing indecision, but a deliberation leading to a sure and fixed judgment. When so taken up, it is not to be abandoned without reason as valid, as fully, and as extensively considered. Peace may be made as unadvisedly as war. Nothing is so rash as fear; and the counsels of pusillanimity very rarely put off, whilst they are always sure to aggravate, the evils from which they would fly."

BURKE.

"——— In a theme so bloody-faced as this,
Conjecture, expectation, and surmise
Of aids uncertain, should not be admitted."

Second Part of KING HENRY IV. Act i. scene iii.

"Is all our travail turned to this effect?
After the slaughter of so many peers,
So many captains, gentlemen, and soldiers,
That in this quarrel have been overthrown,
And sold their bodies for their country's benefit,
Shall we at last conclude effeminate peace?"

First Part of KING HENRY VI. Act v. scene iv.

"Thou wear a lion's hide! Doff it for shame,
And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs."

KING JOHN. Act iii. scene i.

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It must be confessed that the war which the American people are now prosecuting, whether we consider the forces engaged, or the result sought to be accomplished, is one of the most momentous that has ever engaged the attention of mankind. Nearly or quite a million and a half of men are assembled in hostile array, and the great question in debate is the American Union. Whether the arbitrament of arms might have been averted, whether the best or wisest policy has been adopted by the party in power, whether our generals have displayed capacity or incapacity, still, the great question which the American people have to determine for themselves and their posterity, is, *whether, in the actual posture of affairs, the Union can be restored by any other means than war? and whether war itself can in the end accomplish that result?*

If the people come to know or believe that war alone can cut the gordian-knot, that an undivided country, and an unshorn greatness, can be pre-

served only by war, then war, under whatever discouragement of military disaster, or financial embarrassment, or administrative folly, will be prosecuted until success crowns and justifies their efforts.

First, then, can any other means be adopted—an armistice, a convention—which will accomplish the desire of all our hearts, which will place the country in the proud position she occupied before this mad outbreak, "the stars of union on her brow, and the rock of independence beneath her feet"—any other means but the genius of arms which can exorcise burning passions and wild ambitions, and constrain within the golden circle of law and constitution the dissevered portions of our common political heritage?

Whoever can believe this in the face of the public acts and declarations of the so-called Confederate Congress; the public and reiterated declarations of the envenomed and implacable Jefferson Davis;* the public and solemn acts of the legislatures of the seceded States; and the repeated and trenchant de-

* In his recent message to the Confederate Congress, Jefferson Davis says:—"Earnest as has been our wish for peace, and great as have been our sacrifices and sufferings during the war, the determination of this people has, with each succeeding month, become more unalterably fixed to endure any sufferings, and continue any sacrifice, however prolonged, until their right to self-government and the sovereignty and independence of these States shall have been triumphantly vindicated and firmly established." The date of this message is January 12, 1863, and it is the latest official expression of the purpose and determination of the Southern people.

clarations of the Southern press, in far greater degree the organ of Southern sentiment than is the Northern press the organ of Northern sentiment; all supported and enforced by the greatest intensity of military effort; whoever can believe this, is a marvel of political credulity, a babe and suckling, at a time which requires the sinewy and robust qualities of a man. No; the object of the South is to sever and divide this Union. Not an act inconsistent with that object has been done, nor a voice in opposition to it been uttered by any Southern man who enjoys the confidence of the Southern people. They tell us through public bodies, through every organ of public sentiment, through all forms and modes of speech, and through the fire, and blood, and desolation of war, that they mean disunion. And shall we be lulled into a fatal security, be induced to grant an armistice, withdraw our blockade, and disband or reduce our army, because some member of Congress, or some member of the New Jersey legislature, upon some loose hypothesis of history or human nature, believes that if the land and naval forces were not in the way, the North and South, from mere passional attraction, would rush into each other's arms in a fond, eternal embrace!

Besides, if these people who have rebelled, who have cast off, and defied the national authority, desire to make terms, if they desire to return again into the bosom of the Union, let them announce

their wishes. They began the war, (we do not here inquire as to the antecedent causes,) let them initiate the peace. But for our part, let us not make advances which will be received with contempt and rejected with scorn.* Let us maintain the honour and uphold the dignity of the Government, and not hawk them in the marts of rebellion. If we must fail in the present contest, let us fail without dishonour, and make a record which our posterity can read without shame.

Upon all the evidence accessible to the public, we are justified in asserting that the only mode of restoring the Union, if it is to be restored at all, is by arms. The path of safety for us and our children is the path of war. Intimations and suggestions of peace, when there is no peace, will only have the effect to sickle over and unnerve our enterprise, and pluck victory from our grasp. The sentiment of union is the natural and master sentiment of this people, and when the conviction enters into their heart of hearts that war alone can insure it, they will support its burdens, and bear up under its difficulties and embarrassments with a cheerful and heroic spirit.

But will war produce the result at which we aim, namely, the extension of the national authority over the seceded States? That, we conceive, depends,

* We refer, of course, to advances looking to peace, on the basis of a restoration of the Union.

under God, upon ourselves, upon our spirit and perseverance. Where the preponderance of numbers and resources are so greatly upon our side, nothing but a plain abandonment of our duty and our interest can accomplish our failure and our ruin. Our obvious difficulty, at present, is a financial one; but "whilst our heart is whole, it will find means or make them." Our resources of every kind are abundant, and should be employed to the utmost, if necessary, to insure and compel success. Our agriculture is flourishing; our industry, in most of its branches, vigorous and remunerative. No man in any description has been deprived of his conveniences, and perhaps, we might add, of his luxuries, in consequence of the war. But to make our resources available, we should adopt a sound system of finance. The most alarming symptom of our present condition is the depreciation of our paper currency. This must be arrested, or the most disastrous consequences will follow. We may preserve the confidence of the people in the capacity of the Government to ultimately redeem its credit; but the moment the issue of Treasury notes exceeds the amount necessary or useful as a circulating medium, they will begin to depreciate, and this depreciation will be irregular, rapid, increasing, and out of all proportion to the excess. It is the duty of Congress to save the Government and the country from the fearful evils of a depreciated currency. This can

be done by a combined system of taxation and loans.

There may be other methods; and that which proposes to get rid of the circulation of the Banks, has much to commend it, though it may perhaps encounter constitutional objections; but this is direct and certain. Under the present tax law, an annual revenue of possibly two hundred millions may be derived. Enlarge the objects of taxation, and increase the rate upon all those now taxed, two or three-fold, and we would have a revenue of five or six hundred millions. And this would not press insupportably upon any class of the community. Indeed, as compared with the policy of an unlimited issue of Treasury notes, it would be an incalculable saving to the creditor class, and to all those classes who are dependent on fixed incomes and the wages of labour. Upon these classes a depreciated currency bears with inexorable severity. It robs the capitalist of his fortune, and the labourer of the fruits of his toil. In effect, it takes from the sailor and the soldier, who are to the country its assurance of safety and success, one-half, or one-quarter, more or less, of their pay, according to the ratio of depreciation. It is due in a peculiar sense to the army and navy, that they be paid in a sound currency.

A system of taxation which of itself would go far to defray the current expenses of the war, would at the same time insure a ready sale of Government

bonds to meet the other requirements of the Treasury. Temporary expedients will not enable us to carry on a protracted war. A permanent system must be adopted, a system which will not be dislocated or deranged by occasional defeat or unexpected disaster, or which, in supplying a present necessity, will have the effect to impair its capacity to supply all future ones. With regular and unfailing means, the Government must in the end triumph. What man has done, man may do. What other nations and other people have done to accomplish what they deemed important objects, we can do to accomplish what is necessary to our safety, our honour, and our peace. The Peloponnesian war lasted twenty-seven years; the first Punic war, twenty-four; and the second, eighteen years. Germany has witnessed a thirty years' war; and the war against Louis XIV., ending with the Treaty of Ryswick, was a war of eighteen years' duration. There are those now living, the first twenty years of whose existence were cotemporaneous with the wars growing out of the French Revolution. What may be the duration of the present war, is known only to the Great Disposer. But it should have been foreseen from the outset, that with a considerable population and resources, with an immense territory, with a vast system of railroads, insuring a speedy transmission of troops and supplies to any threatened point, and with the impetus of revolutionary zeal and fanaticism, the

South possessed the elements of a prolonged resistance. Undoubtedly, the light and facile predictions of men in power, that the rebellion would be speedily overthrown, has had an injurious influence. The utter failure of these predictions has had a tendency to produce discouragement at home, and to create doubt of our success abroad.

It seems, however, characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, with all their hardihood and tenacity, to be easily elated and easily depressed. They enter upon a war with the most sanguine expectations, and at the first reverse give way to unmanly apprehensions. "I remember," says Mr. Burke, "in the beginning of what has lately been called the Seven Years' War, that an eloquent writer and ingenious speculator, Dr. Brown, upon some reverses which happened in the beginning of that war, published an elaborate philosophical discourse to prove that the distinguishing features of the people of England had been totally changed, and that a frivolous effeminacy was become the national character. Nothing could be more popular than that work. It was thought a great consolation to us, the light people of this country, (who were and are light, but who were not and are not effeminate,) that we had found the causes of our misfortunes in our vices. Pythagoras could not be more pleased with his leading discovery. But whilst in that splenetic mood, we amused ourselves in a sour critical speculation, of which we were our-

selves the objects, and in which every man lost his particular sense of the public disgrace in the epidemic nature of the distemper; whilst, as in the Alps, *goitre* kept *goitre* in countenance; whilst we were thus abandoning ourselves to a direct confession of our inferiority to France; and whilst many, very many, were ready to act upon a sense of that inferiority, a few months effected a total change in our variable minds. We emerged from the gulf of that speculative despondency, and were buoyed up to the highest point of practical vigour. Never did the masculine spirit of England display itself with more energy, nor ever did its genius soar with a prouder preëminence over France, than at the time when frivolity and effeminacy had been at least tacitly acknowledged as their national character by the good people of this kingdom."*

We are now having our season of doubt, uneasiness, and dissatisfaction. But, after all, notwithstanding the failure of our military efforts at certain points and on certain lines of operation, caused, it is said, (we know not with how much or how little truth,) by the interference of the civil department of the Government, and, in part, by an unprovided for and unexpected power of resistance on the side of the enemy; by delays, by incapacity, by prodigal waste of strength and resources on the part of *some-*

* Burke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 336.

body, we have nevertheless gained very considerable and substantial successes. To say nothing of our acquisitions on the seaboard, we have redeemed Missouri, Kentucky, and a large portion of Tennessee. Western Virginia is safe from the grasp of secession; and the capture of New Orleans* subjects Louisiana practically to our sway. But since we have been baffled at Richmond, at Vicksburg—since, in fact, our reasonable or our unreasonable hopes have not all been fulfilled, we are disposed, such is the temper of the public mind, to regard nothing gained.

It is vain, however, to look for uniform and uninterrupted success. Man is fallible as well as mortal, and the best laid plans often go awry. The most successful wars, in their results, that have ever been prosecuted, were wars of very variable fortunes. But while there will be, from the incapacity of man, or the accidents of fortune, reverses, with consequent disappointment and discouragement, there never should be despair. The Romans, with Hannibal at their gates, with the fairest portions of Italy subject to his sway, preserved a high and unconquerable spirit, would listen to no terms that might tarnish the honour or reduce the weight and power of their

* Mr. Edouard Laboulaye, in his Essay in the *Revue Nationale*, which has been republished in our press, says: "To possess New Orleans is to command a valley which comprises two-thirds of the United States.' This is what an intelligent foreigner thinks of the value of that city to the power which holds it.

country; and the result of the struggle was the total overthrow of Carthage. The preponderance of strength was on the side of the Romans; and, though suffering defeat after defeat, that fact, together with their inexorable resolution, determined and made sure their triumph and ascendency.

Mr. Stillé, in his recent excellent pamphlet, has shown us what England did, and in the face of what obstacles and discouragements, in the prosecution of the Peninsular War. There is another instructive chapter in her history, of an earlier date, which is equally worthy of our attention. We refer to the war which was concluded by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Throughout the whole of it, England's principal strength, as has been said by Mr. Burke, was found in the resolution of the people. What was her condition at that period? Scotland dissatisfied and discontented; Ireland held in subjection by an army of forty thousand men; the current coin of the realm "reduced so low as not to have above three parts in four of the value in the shilling;" the revenue arising from commerce comparatively trifling; and the public credit a thing which could hardly be said to exist. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, "with the Lord Mayor of London at his side, was obliged, like a solicitor for an hospital, to go, cap in hand, from shop to shop, to borrow an hundred pounds, and even smaller sums." Yet,

says Mr. Burke,* "in that state of things, amidst the general debasement of the coin, the fall of the ordinary revenue, the failure of all the extraordinary supplies, the ruin of commerce, and the almost total extinction of an infant credit, the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself, whom we have just seen begging from door to door, came forward to move a resolution, full of vigour, in which, far from being discouraged by the generally adverse fortune, and the long continuance of the war, the Commons agreed to address the crown in the following manly, spirited, and truly animating style:

"'This is the *eighth* year in which your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects the Commons, in Parliament assembled, have assisted your Majesty with large supplies for carrying on a just and necessary war, in defence of our religion, and preservation of our laws, and vindication of the rights and liberties of the people of England.

"'To show to your Majesty and all Christendom, that the Commons of England will not be *amused* or diverted from their firm resolutions of obtaining by *war*, a safe and honourable peace, we do, in the name of those we represent, renew our assurances to support your Majesty and your government against all your enemies at home and abroad; and that we will effectually assist you in carrying on the war against France.'"

* Letters on a Regicide Peace.

The real object of that war was to reduce the power of France, and to maintain the ascendency of England in the affairs and councils of Europe. It was believed to be an important object, and the courage and constancy she displayed in prosecuting and accomplishing it, should serve as a lesson and a guide to us in the noble endeavour to provide for our future security by preserving our country unbroken. Let not the historian have it to record, that the American people, in their fresh and vigorous manhood, in the light of the great examples furnished them by the states of ancient and modern times, had not the fortitude to suppress and put down an insidious rebellion, but for the sake of their ease, permitted their country to be torn in twain!

But suppose that our resolution should give way, and we should be brought to that state of humiliation in which we should be ready to make terms with the seceded States on the basis of their independence! What would be the character of those terms? Where would the boundary lines be fixed? Could we abandon and give up the fortresses that command the commerce of the gulf, and are essential to its protection? Could we give up Fortress Monroe, and our controul of the waters of the Chesapeake? Could we surrender Western Virginia, which has shown throughout an undivided and unsuspecting loyalty, and which, in the possession of a foreign power, would be a sort of natural fortification, com-

manding the upper waters of the Ohio, and from which predatory forces could issue to plunder and lay waste the valleys of Pennsylvania, or armies to dispute their permanent possession? Could we, as men of honour or humanity, abandon the loyal citizens of East Tennessee, who throughout this contest, amid persecution, suffering, and death, have remained firm and undaunted and true to the flag and country of their fathers? Could we abandon Kentucky, which, under sore trials and temptations, has in the main been

"—— faithful found
Among the faithless ———"?

and be shorn of our absolute controul of the navigation of the Ohio? Could we consent that Missouri, which is directly in our pathway to the States of the Pacific, and which contains within itself an imperial domain, and a population which approaches in numbers to an equality with that of North and South Carolina combined, should take her place in the rival and hostile confederacy? Could we permit the frontier of a foreign power to be the line of the Potomac, and the capital of our country to be commanded by batteries on Arlington heights?

Yet, if in our abasement we should be ready to offer terms at all, this is the entertainment to which we would be invited—this the sort of submission that would be required of us; submission, in the first

place, to the dismemberment of our country, and then to the surrender of States which have clung to us in all our fortunes, and whose possession is necessary to our security! In a word, it would be submission to a present full of ignominy and disgrace, and a future full of peril!

But even were we base enough and abject enough to think submission, and such submission, we should have no peace; we should not only have perpetual cause of collision with the rival power placed in such audacious neighbourhood, but we should have contention and war within our own borders, and at our own hearthstones. No sooner would the separation be accomplished, than political intrigue would seek to withdraw Pennsylvania and the States of the Northwest from their relations to the Federal Government, and attach them to the Southern Confederacy. The men of lead and influence at the South know full well that the vast and fertile regions watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries, will, within a short flight of time, have a population of forty or fifty millions; and that meanwhile, the South, slowly recovering from the loss and exhaustion of this conflict, with her system of slavery practically excluding emigration, will be in presence of this irrepressible population, like an infant beneath an overhanging mass of earth or rock, which any accident may precipitate with crushing force upon its head. They would endeavour, there-

fore, to form a union with the Northwest, and thus avert the otherwise inevitable future conflict for the control of the Mississippi. Pennsylvania, too, would be brought within the circle of these intrigues and designs. But would they be likely to succeed here or elsewhere? There are those who think that so far as the Northwest is concerned they inevitably would. Have these persons considered the obstacles in the way? Have they considered the character of the western population, and its origin? Have they ever heard of the Western Reserve? Do they reflect that the ever-increasing population of the northern portion of those States in the vicinity of the great rivers and lakes is in the main, exclusive of European emigration, from New England, from New York, from New Jersey, from northern and western Pennsylvania; and that the Union of their fathers is the only Union to which they would voluntarily belong?

We have referred to the northern portions of those States; but we have no evidence that the southern portions would greatly differ from their northern neighbours. Nevertheless, in certain political contingencies, the men in favour of a union with the South might hold the reins of power in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, and endeavour to consummate it. But does anybody who has ever read the great volume of human nature suppose that such a movement could be essayed without being resisted to the

utmost, and to the last gasp. Will the fathers, brothers, sons, of those who have poured out their blood and laid down their lives in resisting the secession of the South, consent that their own States shall imitate the abhorred example—shall strike hands, and join the authors of their calamity? Will the survivors of the hard-fought fields of this sanguinary contest, the sad remains of war, consent that the theatre of a successful revolt shall be their country? Will all those classes who, in their respective spheres, have supported the war, and devoted to its prosecution their property and all that they hold dear, submit that such should be the inglorious fruit of their endeavours? No; they would resist, they would spurn the political act or ordinance that sought to deliver them over to the South, and internecine and neighbourhood war would be the result.

Meanwhile, would the general Government remain an idle spectator of the contest? Would it permit, unmoved and unresisting, these jewels to be wrested from its crown? Certainly not. The general Government would come to the support of its friends, and the southern Government to the support of theirs, and thus the war would be renewed, and would be a local and general, a national and neighbourhood war, at one and the same time. In such a war, farewell, a long farewell, to the prosperity and happiness of Pennsylvania.

The springs and sources of her greatness would be dried up; her fair and fertile plains, her vast system of industry, her public works, her towns and cities, would be swept as with the besom of destruction. Let her look on Virginia, and contemplate an outline, but not the finished picture, of what would then be her condition. To save her from that condition and that fate, to save our whole country from the terrible evils that would ensue from the success of the South, it is necessary to prosecute the war with unceasing effort, with unflagging energy, until our objects are fully attained.* And those objects

* M. Laboulaye, in the Essay already referred to, makes the following striking observations, which deserve the serious consideration of those who vainly suppose that peace will be a panacea for all our ills:

"Now suppose the separation accomplished, and that the new confederation comprises all the slave States, the North loses in one day its power and its institutions. The republic is struck in the heart. There are in America two nations in the presence of each other, two rival peoples always on the point of quarrelling. Peace, in short, will not put an end to enmity; the remembrance of past greatness, of the destroyed Union, will not be effaced. The South, as conquerer, will not be less the friend of slavery, nor less fond of domination. The enemies of slavery, masters of their policy, will certainly not be softened by separation. What will the confederation of the South be to the North? A foreign power established in America, with a frontier of fifteen hundred miles, a frontier exposed on all sides, and consequently always menacing or menaced. This power, hostile even from its vicinity, and still more so from its institutions, will possess some of the most considerable portions of the new world; it will have half the coast of the Union; it will command the Gulf of Mexico, an internal sea which is the third of the Mediterranean; it will be mistress of the mouths of the Mississippi, and able, at pleasure, to ruin the populations of the West. It will, therefore, be necessary that the remains of the old Union be always ready to defend itself from its rival.

can be attained as certainly now, as economically in point of blood and treasure, as at any future period. We assume that at some time, either now or here-

Questions of customs, dues, and of frontiers, rivalries, jealousies, all the curses which weigh upon old Europe, will overwhelm America at once. It will be necessary to establish custom-houses over a space of five hundred leagues, to construct and arm forts on this immense frontier, maintain large standing armies and a navy; in other words, it will be necessary to renounce the old Constitution, weaken municipal independence, and concentrate power. Adieu to the former glorious liberty! Adieu to those institutions which have made America the common country of all those who had no room to breathe in Europe! The work of Washington will be destroyed; men will find themselves in a situation full of difficulties and perils. That such a future should rejoice those who cannot pardon America her prosperity and her greatness, I can readily understand. History is full of such sad jealousy. That a people accustomed to liberty should risk its last man and its last cent to preserve the heritage of its fathers, I can still better understand, and I approve of it. What I do not understand is, that there are in Europe persons who believe themselves to be liberals even while reproaching the North for its generous resistance, and while advising it to make a shameful abdication. War is a fearful evil, but out of it may come a durable peace. The South may become tired of a contest which exhausts it. The old Union may rise up again, the future may be saved. But what can come of separation, except war without end, and calamities without number? This tearing of a country to pieces is a downfall past remedy: such a misfortune can only be accepted when we are crushed.

"Hitherto I have reasoned on the hypothesis that the South will remain an independent power. But, unless the West shall join the Confederates, and the Union shall be reëstablished *minus* New England, this independence is a chimera. It may last some years; but in ten or twenty years, when the West shall have doubled or trebled its free population, what will the confederation be, (weakened as it will be by servile culture,) alongside of a nation of thirty millions of men, which will enclose it on two sides? In order to resist it, the South will have to lean upon Europe; it can exist only on condition of being protected by a great maritime power; and England alone is in a state to guarantee to it its sovereignty. This will be a

after, they must in the main be attained. For, if we would have permanent peace and security, it is an indispensable condition that there should be substantially a restoration of the Union.

Between us and our objects stand the southern armies in Virginia and the Southwest. Defeat, break up, and scatter these armies, and the basis of the rebellion falls. It is supported by force, and when the force fails, there 's an end. Undoubtedly, it will require courage, skill, and time, to overthrow this force; but if our heart remains whole, if our finances are kept in a sound condition, the issue is not uncertain.

new danger to free America and to Europe. There is no marine in the South, and while slavery lasts there never will be any; it will be England who, from the very first moment, will seize the monopoly of cotton, and furnish the South with capital and ships. In two words, the triumph of the South will result in the reinstallation of England on that continent whence the policy of Louis XVI. and Napoleon expelled her; weakened neutrals and France will again be involved in all those questions relative to the freedom of the seas which have cost us two hundred years of struggle and suffering. The American Union, in defending its rights, has established the independence of the ocean. The Union destroyed, English preponderance will instantly revive. Peace will be exiled from the world; there will be the return of a policy which has benefited only our rivals. This is what Napoleon felt, but what is forgotten now. It seems that history is nothing but a collection of tales fit to amuse youth; no one is willing to understand the lessons of the past. If the experience of our fathers were not lost in our ignorance, we should see that in asserting its independence, in maintaining the national unity, it is our cause as well as its own which the North is defending. All our prayers should be for our old and faithful friends. The weakening of the United States will be our own weakness. On the first quarrel with England, we shall regret too late our having abandoned a policy which for forty years has been our security."

It is vastly important that the Democratic party, which has in the past exercised so controling an influence in the State and National Governments, should not—from opposition to the present Administration, from opposition to its conduct and policy, as being in some things unwise, and in others unconstitutional, and in many things wanting in elevation and dignity—be betrayed, even in appearance, into opposition to the war, which is the cause of our country, and, for weal or woe, involves its fate. In every war which the Government has hitherto waged, that party has rallied with unbroken and unfaltering ranks to its succour and support. In the far more stupendous contest in which we are now engaged, let it do no discredit to the bright examples of the past, but, animated and inspired by the old feeling and the old patriotism,

> "Stand for its country's glory fast,
> And nail her colours to the mast."

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